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ABSTRACT

There has been much literature on the effectiveness of program evaluation. Many feel evaluation has lost its justification; others are more optimistic and feel evaluation can make a difference if the use levels are viewed realistically. Administrators must not regard program evaluation as merely complying with various agency requirements or representing a one-to-one matching between input and output where instrumentality is obvious. Because the evaluator's credibility and positive relationship with his client are critical to the use of evaluative information, Meltsner (1976) developed a specific model for conceptualizing the evaluator's role. The purpose of this study was to employ Meltsner's model to explore administrators' and evaluators' perceptions of evaluation. Eighteen evaluators and 13 administrators from a large urban school system responded to 43 items which were grouped into clusters through factor analysis. Findings indicated the mental paradigms of evaluators and administrators were very different. More research is needed in other settings to validate findings of this study. To facilitate evaluation use, exploration of interpersonal factors is recommended. (HFG)

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DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN ADMINISTRATORS' AND EVALUATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF EVALUATION

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The literature on the use of program evaluation information contains numerous desultory comments regarding the use of evalative information in local school systems. For example, Rippey (1973, p. 9) concluded that "at the moment, there seems to be no evidence that evaluation, although the law of the land, contributes anything to educational practice other than headaches for the researcher, threats for the innovators, and depressing articles for journals devoted to evaluation." Practitioners in local education agency (LEA) settings offer similar views. For example, Holley (1979, p. 2) notes that "in an ideal world we wouldn't have to worry about utilization. Educators would be eagerly awaiting our findings and would promptly rush to put them into practice. I don't have to tell you that isn't happening." These concerns are serious, because "if evaluative information is not useful, if it does not meet the needs of decision makers, then evaluation has lost its justification" (Alkin, Kosecoff, Fitz-Gibbon, & Seligman, 1974, p. 1).

Fortunately, more recent studies suggest that these pessimistic views may be somewhat unrealistic. Thus Alkin, Daillak, and White (1979, p. 16), emphasis in original) argue that "taken together, the studies and our observations and experiences suggest to us that evaluation <u>can</u> make a difference, that it does so more often than the published critiques suggest, that some school districts characteristically produce a high proportion of useful evaluations, and that some evaluators have acquired skills that allow them to carry out technically competent <u>and</u> programmatically influential evaluations." In an extensive review of the literature on the use of evaluation in LEA settings, King, Thompson, and Pechman (1981) identify at least two factors that may have led evaluators to become unrealistically disheartened about use levels. First, although evaluators may always intend that results should be used, administrators may tolerate some evaluation

endeavors merely to comply with various agency requirements. Alkin (1980, p. 3) makes the point using the analogy of a garden party: "Suppose the host... should insist that each of the guests periodically rate the quality of the party, or the drinks or the food, etc.--it can't really be expected to have much impact. This somewhat peculiar, externally imposed requirement will be tolerated as part of the 'price of admission,' so to speak, but it won't really change the behavior of individuals."

A second and even more important perspective on the use of evaluative information involves the difficulty of detecting use. As Wise (1980, p. 24) suggests, "if there is an evaluation utilization problem, it is not that decision-makers do not use the information they receive, it is that evaluators cannot easily see their information being used in the incrementalism of real-world decision-making." This has become more apparent as evaluators have recognized that there are several types of use that vary in their visibility and impacts. Traditionally, many evaluators unconsciously looked for instrumental use of evaluative results, i.e., the making of go/no go decisions that purportedly could be detected by tracing "a single decision to a single piece of knowledge in a one-to-one matching between input and output" (Pelz, 1978, p. 354). This type of use rarely occurs, though examples of instrumental use certainly can be identified (e.g., Alkin, Daillak & White, 1979, p. 224).

However, probably the more common form of use has been termed conceptual use, i.e., use "influencing a policymaker's thinking about an issue without putting information to any specific documentable use" (Rich, 1977, p. 200). As Cronbach, Ambron, Dornbusch, Hess, Hornik, Phillips, Walker, and Weiner (1980, p. 193)

correctly note, "stimulating a discussion that leads to gradual change in prevailing views is very likely the most important effect of evaluation research." In short, because evaluation use can be difficult to observe, some evaluators may tend to underestimate evaluation impacts. Such a view does help resolve the seemingly paradoxical finding (e.g., Alkin et al., 1974; King & Thompson, 1983) that administrators themselves do consistently report that evaluation is useful.

Another consistent finding in the literature is that the evaluator's credibility with clients, in all its forms, is critical to the use of evaluative information. Thus Holley (1979, p. 8) reports that "utilization is usually the result of the relationship between the evaluator and the user more than anything else. If the user knows and respects the evaluator, utilization has its highest potential." Similarly, based on a review of empirical literature, Leviton and Hughes (1979, p. 21) indicate that "the evidence on dissemination suggests that informal communication that cuts the red tape may enhance utilization, although quality of information may sometimes suffer and dissemination will be haphazard." Thompson and King (1981) have emphasized the importance of reliance upon theoretical propositions to explain why use phenomena occur. In light of House's (1977, p. 5) suggestion that "evaluations themselves, I would contend, can be no more than acts of persuasion," communication theory has been employed to explain these use dynamics. The theory's origins can be traced back to the Rhetoric of Aristotle (?/1886, p. 11), who himself argued that "we may practically lay it down as a general rule that there is no proof so effective as that of the character of the speaker, i.e., ethos ." Communication theory provides fairly specific guidance for evaluation practice (Thompson, 1981), and seemingly supports the recommendation of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1981, p. 24) that "if the confidence and trust of these client audiences cannot be

secured, the evaluator should seriously consider not proceeding."

Meltsner (1976) has offered a specific model for conceptualizing the evaluator's role. Meltsner suggested that evaluators can be differentiated from each other by their reliance (high or low) on combinations of analytical and political or interpersonal skills. The four unique combinations of degrees of reliance on these two skills define four "types" of evaluators. Though some practicing evaluators regard at least Melstner's labels for the four "types" of evaluators as being pejorative (Thompson, 1982, pp. 15-17), empirical research suggests that evaluation clients are sensitive to manifestations of these two skill dimensions (Thompson & King, 1981). Thompson (1980, p. 64) found that two "types" of evaluators, i.e., those that place high and low reliance on analytical and political skills, respectively, and those that place low and high reliance on analytical and political skills, respectively, may not be common in LEA evaluation settings.

The purpose of the present study was to employ Meltsner's model to explore administrators' and evaluators' perceptions of evaluation. Direct comparisons of these two perspectives appear to be non-existent in the current literature. More specifically, the study employed Meltsner's framework as a basis for addressing two research questions. First, do LEA administrators and LEA evaluators have similar views of evaluation and the evaluator's role in the educational process? Second, given that clusters of study participants can be identified, which attitudes and opinions regarding evaluation differentiate the clusters?

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 18 evaluators and 13 upper-level administrators employed in a large, urban, public school system. The sample of evaluators consisted of full-time, professional members of the system's evaluation department. The administrators who participated in the study included six persons whose responsibilities primarily included administration of curriculum matters. An additional seven administrators had line administrative responsibilities.

Instrumentation

Meltsner (1976, p. 48) has suggested that various types of evaluators can be differentiated on the basis of factors such as central professional motivation, standards of success, credibility vested in various forms of prooof, and orientation toward evaluation projects involving shorter or longer time perspectives. Thirty-six items were developed to measure these variables. Typical items were: "Good evaluators judge their success by what other evaluators think of their work" and "Research skill is only one of the tools which can be used in evaluation studies."

More recent literature also recognizes the importance of evaluators actively working to see that evaluation results are used. For example, Polivka and Steg (1978, p. 697) argue that "traditionally, the evaluator has been very hesitant to claim any responsibility for the use of his/her findings. This approach has helped make it very easy to ignore evaluation results." Similarly, the members of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1981, p. 47) suggested that "evaluators must not assume that improvements will occur automatically once the evaluation report is completed. Such improvements must be stimulated and guided, and evaluators can and should perform an important role in this process." Consequently, an additional seven items were employed to measure judgment of evaluators' efforts to

optimize the use of evaluative information.

Procedure

The 31 subjects individually sorted the 43 statements into a quasi-normal distribution, in the usual fashion of a Q-study, based upon extent of agreement with each of the statements. As Kerlinger (1973, p. 598) notes, "one can rarely generalize to populations from Q person samples. Indeed, one usually does not wish to do so. Rather, one tests theories on small sets of individuals carefully chosen for their 'known' or presumed possession of some significant characteristic or characteristics here job role ... Used thus, Q is an important and unique approach to the study of psychological, sociological, and educational phenomena."

Results

Q-technique factor analysis was employed to address the study's two research questions. The technique groups subjects into clusters based on similarities in response patterns. However, unlike the more commonly applied R-technique methods, Q-technique analysis can be utilized only when the number of subjects is small relative to the number of variables in the study. Thus a preliminary Q-technique factor analysis was conducted to exclude 11 of the study's 31 participants. This represents operalization of the conservative convention that the number of subjects in a Q-analysis should be at least one less than one-half the number of sorted statements.

Five subjects for each of the four factors identified in the preliminary analysis were selected for inclusion in the final analysis; these 20 subjects were identified by selecting the five subjects per factor who had the highest correlation

with each of the factors identified in the preliminary analysis. This procedure was not considered to bias subsequent results with respect to the study's two research questions, since the subjects' job roles (administrator vs. evaluator) and statement preferences were not consulted. Instead, the procedure served to provide a final solution with "simpler structure" since the 11 subjects who were excluded by definition contributed less to the formation of the clusters identified in the preliminary analysis. This theoretically should provide a more stable framework for addressing the study's two research questions.

The clusters of the remaining 11 evaluators and nine administrators are presented in Table 1. All principal components with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted. The factor scores for the 43 statements that differentiated the four factors are presented in Table 2.

INSERT TABLES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE.

Discussion

The study's first research question asked whether administrators and evaluators have similar views of evaluation and the evaluator's role. This question can be addressed by interpreting the results presented in Table 1. It is noteworthy that each of the four clusters of subjects consists of both administrators and evaluators. The first two factors, which accounted for more variance than did the second two factors, in particular consisted of a mix of evaluators and administrators. Even the last two factors included several evaluators who also were associated with one of the first two factors and thus had response patterns that were associated with those of some administrators.

The study's second research question asked which attitudes and opinions define and differentiate the identified clusters of subjects. This question can be addressed by consulting the factor scores for the 43 statements presented in Table 2 for each of the four factors. With respect to the first factor, although the Table 1 results indicate that four of the evaluators were associated with the factor, it is noteworthy that all of the administrators involved in the final analysis were associated to an appreciable degree with this cluster of subjects. The Table 2 values suggest that these subjects believe that evaluators must emphasize long-term impacts when evaluating programs and believe that good administrators at least try to use evaluative information when making decisions. The factor scores for items seven and 34 suggest that the subjects believe that evaluators should be particularly sensitive to considering program impacts on program participants. The factor score for statement 42 suggests that these subjects do not view evaluation as an inherently political process. This cluster of subjects seems to view the evaluator as a patient and service-oriented agent woking on behalf of program clients.

The second factor also consisted of many of the administrators and several of the evaluators. The Table 2 results indicate that these subjects believe that evaluators should not concern themselves with judging the worth of program goals. These subjects believe that evaluators should avoid making policy recommendations. The subjects also believe that non-quantitative ways of evaluating programs are valid. Scores for several items, e.g., items nine, 32, and 40, suggest that these subjects believe that evaluators should interact regularly with administrators. This cluster of subjects seems to view the evaluator as a responsible agent of administrators and as a professional who is fairly legalistic and concrete in defining job description.

As the Table 1 results indicate, the third factor essentially consisted of five or six evaluators and one administrator. The factor scores for the 43 statements with respect to this factor indicate that the subjects resent evaluations being conducted merely to justify a decision that has already been taken. The subjects believe that it is acceptable that some evaluations generate controversy. The subjects believe that evaluators should solicit administrative input regarding the focus of an evaluation. The subjects do not believe that evaluators should evaluate the philosophies underlying programs. The subjects believe that evaluators should use various forms of proof, should consider the timing of their efforts, and should try to get all available information before acting. This cluster of subjects seems to view the evaluator as a person who should be practical and politically sensitive in making decisions, e.g., selecting forms of proof and timing the release of reports.

The fourth factor essentially consisted of five evaluators and one administrator. The subjects who clustered together on this factor believe that evaluators should make policy recommendations to administrators, as indicated for example by factor scores for statements 17 and 22. The subjects believe that evaluators should consider both short- and long-term issues when evaluating programs. It is considered acceptable that some evaluations provoke controversy. Good evaluators are assumed to be good with both people and numbers. This cluster of subjects seems to view the evaluator as an activist professional whose purpose is to improve the operation of institutions by adopting balanced perspectives regarding program ends and the means selected to achieve these ends.

Several general patterns emerge from these various results. First, the finding that each factor included both administrators and evaluators suggests that at least some representatives of each group hold views of evaluation that are compatible with the views of some counterparts. Second, the finding that most of the administrators clustered together on the first two factors suggests that administrators' views of evaluation and of evaluators are more homogeneous than are the corresponding views of evaluators.

The factor scores for statement 18, presented in Table 2, are worthy of comment. The result suggests that the first two clusters of study participants, which included the administrators, believe that evaluation is influential. The scores for the item on the third and fourth factors, which consisted primarily of evaluators, indicate that these two clusters of subjects are less optimistic about evaluation's impacts. This result replicates previously mentiond findings already in the literature. It is conceivable that evaluators underestimate the impacts of evaluation while administrators overestimate evaluation's current utility. Hopefully this paradox will be more directly investigated in future research that examines particular types of utility. Granville (1977), for example, investigated which types of decisions might be best facilitated by LEA evaluation, but the study did not compare administrators' and evaluators' views regarding specific types of decisions and the corresponding utility of evaluation.

Overall, the results provide some support for a conclusion that the "Two Communities" concept (Caplan, Morrison & Stambaugh, 1975) may characterize LEA settings. The concept suggests that the perspectives or mental paradigms that administrators and evaluators employ to guide behavior and interpret events are very different and that consequently communication between the two "communities" is

impeded. The empirical finding (Lyon, Doscher, McGranahan & Williams, 1978) that many LEA evaluators and LEA administrators have different backgrounds certainly lends credence to this possibility. The administrators in the present study seemed to be more reflective about the end purposes of evaluation than were at least some of the evaluators. Of course, it is heartening that a majority of the subjects in the study were associated with the first factor, and thus apparently place considerable emphasis on evaluation as a vehicle to improve program service to program clients.

However, the conclusions reported here must be generalized with caution, since this research involved subjects from only one school system. Thus additional research in other LEA settings is required. The literature contains very few theoretically grounded, direct comparisons of LEA administrators' and LEA evaluators' views of evaluation and the evaluation process. This situation is distressing because, as Gurel (1975, pp. 27-28) has observed, "the major barriers to successful evaluation are not technical and methodological, though these are certainly important and worthy of further effort, but are rather the structural constraints and requirements and the interpersonal relationships which characterize the evaluation endeavor." The development of theoretical models and the completion of studies involving these interpersonal dynamics will not be easy. Such efforts may also offend the sensibilities of some persons who regard evaluators as individual people whose behaviors and biliefs are shaped by idiosyncratic factors that make the dynamics purportedly both impossible and inappropriate to study. But our ability to make educational evaluation in LEA settings reach its full potential may ultimately require that we moderate our sensitivities and continue to explore the interpersonal factors that really seem to make evaluation use happen. The alternative is to retain limited understanding of and control over the impacts of the profession.

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Table 1

Varimax Rotated Factor Structure

Group	Subject	Factor I	II	III	IV
Evaluators	2	.64*	.17	.01	.29
	3	.78*	.05	.17	.38
	5	.06	.73*	.42*	.26
	7	.21	.06	.39	.72*
	7	.29	.55*	-.02	.63*
	10	-.04	.54*	.60*	.07
	13	.27	.26	.70*	.45*
	15	.44*	.34	.21	.49*
	16	.04	.00	.79*	.08
	17	.14	.10	.14	.84*
	18	.46*	.34	.58*	.17
Staff Administrators	19	.38	.78*	.02	.16
	21	.31	.69*	.32	.25
	22	.54*	.22	.62	.14
	23	.57*	.31	.05	.48*
	24	.38	.80*	.21	-.08
Line Administrators	26	.60*	.32	.29	.30
	28	.66*	.37	.34	.15
	29	.79*	.36	.07	-.05
	30	.37	.65*	.02	.36

Note: Structure coefficients greater than an absolute value of .4 are indicated with an asterisk.

Table 2

Factor Scores on Items

Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV		Item
3.1	-1.7	.6	-2.1	1.	Good evaluators evaluate programs primarily in terms of their long-term impacts.
1.0	-1.1	.9	.1	2.	Most quality evaluation reports place a heavy emphasis on research results.
-1.2	3.3	.6	-1.9	3.	The evaluator's job is to evaluate programs or policies; it is not the evaluator's job to judge the purposes of programs.
-.6	-.6	.4	-.7	4.	It is more important for evaluators to know a little about a lot of things rather than to know a whole lot about a few things.
1.8	.6	.7	.8	5.	Good administrators actively try to use evaluation results in making decisions.
1.0	.5	.7	1.1	6.	Good evaluators consider the practical aspects of how programs work when they conduct evaluation studies.
1.4	-.6	.2	.7	7.	Projects should be evaluated primarily in terms of how well they help their clients.
-.5	-1.3	.8	.3	8.	Good evaluators hate making recommendations that probably will not be accepted.
-1.1	-1.3	-1.2	-.1	9.	Good administrators are usually too busy to meet very often with evaluators.
-.1	-.8	1.1	-.9	10.	Good evaluators want to feel influential and important.
.1	.3	1.4	1.0	11.	Research methods are important in evaluation, but so are some other forms of insight that should be used along with them.
-.8	.1	-1.1	.9	12.	Evaluators can judge their success by how much access they have to the people who make all the decisions.
-1.6	.3	2.4	.0	13.	Good evaluators strongly resent it when they are asked to perform an analysis in order to justify a decision which has already been made.
-1.3	-.8	-.7	-.6	14.	Good administrators realize that evaluation results are very limited in their ability to mirror program realities, therefore good administrators place limited emphasis on evaluation evidence when making decisions.
.8	.7	.7	.0	15.	Visiting projects and observing activities in an open, non-directed way can be an important part of a good evaluation.
.6	-.4	1.2	-.9	16.	Good evaluators strongly desire to be told that they are doing a good job.
-.2	1.8	.5	-2.0	17.	Good evaluators may know what policy or program decisions should be made, but it is not their job to make policy recommendations.
-1.9	-1.3	.5	1.2	18.	To be honest, evaluation probably doesn't influence decision making very much.

-.1	-.5	-.6	.9	19.	It is very important to good evaluators to work on projects that are "where the action is."
.2	.8	-.2	1.6	20.	Good evaluators frequently enjoy doing studies that meet the short-run needs of decision makers, but they also enjoy working on analyses with longer-range time perspectives.
-.9	-.5	-1.3	-1.6	21.	If an evaluation result is not immediately used for decision making purposes, the evaluation must have been bad.
.4	.2	-.4	1.8	22.	The job of a good evaluator is to give decision makers both information and recommendations.
-.4	-.1	-1.3	-.5	23.	Most good evaluators prefer working on problems that can be solved fairly quickly.
-.2	-.1	1.4	-.8	24.	Good evaluators think a lot about "timing" when they decide when to release their evaluation reports.
.3	.6	.0	.8	25.	Good evaluators enjoy working with people.
.0	.6	-.3	.3	26.	Good evaluators actively work to get administrators to use evaluation results as part of decision making.
-.0	.8	-.6	-.4	27.	It is important for good evaluators to acquire even skills which they aren't certain they will ever use.
-.4	-.3	1.2	-.1	28.	Good evaluators are successful mostly because of their communication and management skills.
.3	.6	.2	1.5	29.	Good evaluators are good with both people and numbers.
.1	-.7	-.7	.3	30.	Good evaluators judge their success by what other evaluators think of their work.
.9	-.5	-1.5	-.2	31.	If a good evaluator disagreed with the philosophy of a program, the evaluator ought to argue against the philosophy in discrete discussion with the right decision makers.
.0	-1.8	.3	-.6	32.	Good evaluators realize that administrators can't reasonably place very much emphasis on evaluation information, so good evaluators don't try to "twist administrators' arms" to get them to use evaluation results in making decisions.
.1	-.2	-1.0	-.7	33.	Good evaluators would someday like to be decision makers rather than evaluators.
1.5	.1	-.9	.2	34.	Good evaluators don't mind sticking their necks out in an analysis, if they think it will make things better for the people the organization is supposed to be serving.
1.0	-.3	-1.3	.5	35.	Good evaluators like to get credit for their work, but it's not absolutely essential to them that they get credit.
-.9	.5	-1.6	.5	36.	Good evaluators feel comfortable selecting the focus for an evaluation report, because they know their bosses' preferences.
-.4	-.5	.0	-1.0	37.	To some extent, the good evaluator believes it is the evaluator's job to please the people they "psychologically" work for, even if these people aren't their official bosses on the organizational charts.

.0	1.3	-1.4	.3	38.	Good evaluators don't feel they have to know every single conceivable fact before they write an evaluation report.
.0	.2	-1.7	-1.9	39.	An evaluation analysis is poorly done if it creates more furor than it resolves.
.7	1.2	1.0	-.2	40.	Good administrators interact often with program evaluators.
.0	1.6	-.2	.7	41.	Research skill is only one of the tools which can be used in evaluation studies.
-2.4	-1.1	.9	.7	42.	Evaluation would be more productive if everybody simply admitted that it is an inherently political process.
.0	.3	.2	1.1	43.	Good evaluators strongly desire to work in an environment with other bright and knowledgeable researchers.

Note: Factor scores were standardized such that the mean on each factor was zero and the SD on each factor was one. Positive scores indicate that the subjects who clustered together to constitute a factor tended to agree with statements; negative scores indicate more disagreement with statements.